Ashley County Library

Hamburg, Arkansas

Note by Ann Veazey:

The historical part of Ashley County could go on and on. It has been very colorful, but how can one go into all the folklore both true and untrue? Briefly, the first known permanent non-Indian settlement in the county was at Longview on the Saline River. This marker now commemorates the contribution made by these early french Families (which were the first) to the settlement of the region. Many of the place names are a corruption of Indian-French words in early history, and many remain the same today. Ashley County was created in 1848 and named for Chester Ashley, a prominent statesman of the time. Hamburg became the county seat of government in 1849. Towns, townships, etc. are listed in the ARKANSAS ALMANAC, 1968, which is, I am sure, available to you there. Should you want more historical facts, if you will give me an idea as to the extent, I will do my best to add more in nutshell condensation.

STATISTICS

Ashley County's population has increased only 13% during the 1960-1969 period -- from 24,220 to 27,355. Yet, the county ranks fourth in the state in average weekly earnings and has recorded a 73% increase in total personal income during this same period - from almost $33 million in 1960 to more than $58 million in 1968.

Forestry is a major asset to the economy of Ashley County. There are more than 461,000 acres of commercial forest lands in the county, which is more than 77% of the county's entire land area. In 1960, the last year for which statistics are available presently, the total pulp-wood harvest was 61,000 cords of pine and more than 32,000 cords of hardwood. (You can well imagine the tremendous increase since that date, especially since Georgia-Pacific entered the picture - Ann's comment)

Georgia-Pacific Corporation, Crossett Division, employs more than 3,000 people in the county and has an investment of $35 million in company-owned timberlands alone.

Industry also has been attracted to the Hamburg area. The Hamburg Shirt Co. employs 250 persons and the P. E. Barnes Lumber Co. now has an employment of 50 people. This industrial growth is reflected in the fact that manufacturing employment in the county has increased 16% during the 1963-1968 period - from 3,287 to 3,833. During the same period, total wages paid in manufacturing employment increased 59%. From slightly over $15 million to more than $24,000 million. Average weekly earnings for workers jumped from $88.80 to $121.34.

Another index of Ashley County's prosperity is that the net effective buying income in the county is more than $45 million - for a per household effective buying income of $6,107.

Ashley County's almost 180,000 acres of farmland supports a total of 788 farms. With 15,000 acres of this farmland under irrigation. As in many other counties of the state, the acreage planted in cotton has decreased considerably in recent years; however, the yield per acre has been remarkable, exceeding the state's average for lint cotton by 295 pounds.

While cotton acreage has declined, soybean acreage increased 103% during the same period and the total soybean yield increased by more than 145%. Rice yields during the same period have increased 47% - from 250,000 bags to 366,000. The production of wheat has risen from virtually nothing in 1963 to almost 33,000 bushels in 1968.

In the livestock field, the production of all cattle and calves and dairy cattle has declined, while the production of hogs and pigs has increased.

A new venture is catfish farms, but there are no statistics on this venture available at this time.

Ashley County, therefore, is definitely moving ahead in the varied economy afforded by forestry, agriculture and industry. This growth is reflected in the total assets in all the banks over the county which are the highest in their history.

Note by Ann: The above statistics were given in connection with the dedication of the new Arkansas Power and Light building within the last year or so. Hence, my presumption to suggest a different line of possible presentation.

cc/Dr. Snow